

Message Text

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ACTION INT-05

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FM AMEMBASSY SANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3972

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PLEASE PASS DAVE DAVIDSON IN US GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: TPHY, EMIN, YE
SUBJ: USGS PROGRAM IN YEMEN?

BEGIN SUMMARY: YEMENI INTEREST IN BROAD USGS ROLE IN
YEMEN MAY ONCE AGAIN BE SURFACING. END SUMMARY.

1. YEMENI GOVERNMENT HAS APPOINTED AHMAD QUAID BARAKAT,
HIGHLY INTELLIGENT AND ACTIVE FORMER AMBASSADOR TO BONN, AS
MINISTER OF STATE IN CHARGE OF NATURAL RESOURCES. AS SUCH,
HIS DUTIES COVER YEMEN PETROLEUM COMPANY, YEMEN SALT
COMPANY, AND YEMEN MINERAL RESOURCES AUTHORITY -- ALL OF
WHICH HAVE BEEN REORGANIZED IN INDEPENDENT CORPORATION
WHICH HE HEADS AS PRESIDENT.

2. AMBASSADOR AND DCM REVIEWED IN DETAIL ON TWO
OCCASIONS ENTIRE HISTORY OF USGS INTEREST IN BROAD MINERAL
SURVEY ROLE IN YEMEN, USING KUWAIT FUND MONEY. WE
STRESSED THAT USGS WAS PREDICTABLY DISAPPOINTED BY
STOP AND START INTEREST OF YARG IN THIS AREA AND, WHILE
USGS WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY CARRY THROUGH ON ITS AGREEMENT
TO PROVIDE PROPOSAL FOR SOILS LAB, WE DOUBTED USGS
WOULD RESPOND TO ANOTHER INQUIRY FROM YARG UNLESS
FINANCING AND SCOPE OF WORK HAD BEEN WELL-DEFINED AND
INVITATION TO USGS WAS PART OF SERIOUS PROCESS THAT
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WOULD CONCLUDE WITH CHOICE OF CONTRACTOR FOR MINERAL
SURVEY IN YEMEN.

3. AMBASSADOR AND DCM STRESSED THAT CHOICE OF SUCH
A CONTRACTOR WAS PREVIOUSLY SUBJECT OF DEBATE WITHIN
YEMENI GOVERNMENT WITH DECISION BEING MADE NOT TO DO
OVERALL "ACADEMIC" SURVEY WHEN NEED WAS FOR PROSPEC-

TING AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF REVENUE PRODUCING MINERAL RESOURCES. AMBASSADOR AND DCM SAID THEY DIDN'T AGREE WITH CHOICE YEMENI GOVERNMENT HAD MADE BUT COULD UNDERSTAND HOW OFFICIALS HERE, SHORT OF CASH AND TRAINED PERSONNEL, MAY HAVE MADE SUCH A DECISION.

4. ABOUT WEEK LATER, AHMAD QUAID BARAKAT PULLED AMBASSADOR ASIDE AND SAID THAT HE DEFINITELY WANTED TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITY OF USGS ROLE HERE IN YEMEN AND COULD ISSUE THEM A SERIOUS INVITATION ALONG LINES WE HAD EARLIER DISCUSSED. HE SAID HE HAD ONCE AGAIN BEEN IN CONTACT WITH KUWAITIS AND THAT MONEY FOR SUCH A SURVEY WAS STILL AVAILABLE. BARAKAT'S PROBLEM WAS THAT, BEING NEW TO JOB, HE DID NOT COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND COSTS, POSSIBLE PROJECTS, BACKGROUND AND TRADE-OFFS OF THIS APPROACH. AMBASSADOR SAID THAT USGS HAD PREVIOUSLY MADE GENERAL PROPOSAL IN THIS AREA AND IT WAS IN HANDS OF ALI JABR AL-ALAWI, HEAD OF MINERAL RESLRCES. HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER THAT PROPOSAL WAS SUFFICIENTLY DETAILED TO SATISFY BARAKAT, BUT THAT WAS GOOD STARTING POINT. BARAKAT SAID HE HAD NOT SEEN REPORT.

5. EMBASSY IS LOATH TO BRING USGS BACK AFTER PREVIOUS TRIP WHEN YEMENIS IN CENTRAL PLANNING OFFICE ASSURED US OF THEIR INTEREST IN OVERALL SURVEY, BUT WHEN DAVE UNCLASSIFIED

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DAVIDSON AND ROY JACKSON ARRIVED, YEMENIS SAID THEY REALLY ONLY WANTED SOIL LABS. WE THINK THAT ISSUE SHOULD BE DISCUSSED A LITTLE MORE LOCALLY BY EMBASSY PERSONNEL AND BY SOMEONE LIKE TIBBITTS WHO COULD REVIEW IN DETAIL HISTORY OF THIS PROJECT FROM POINT OF VIEW OF GEOLOGIST AND USGS. OPPORTUNITY IS, OF COURSE, STILL AN ENTICING ONE FOR USG AS WELL AS USGS SINCE MINERAL RESOURCES OF YEMEN MAY BE ONLY MAJOR EXPORT OPPORTUNITY OF THIS COUNTRY IN NEXT 10 YEARS AND GEOLOGY OF YEMEN IS SCIENTIFICALLY FASCINATING. ON BALANCE, THEREFORE, IF USGS STILL INTERESTED, WE WILL ATTEMPT TO PURSUE DISCUSSIONS LOCALLY. STRONGLY URGE THAT TIBBITTS COME BACK FOR BRIEF DISCUSSIONS WITH AHMAD QUAID BARAKAT.

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